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Message Text

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ORIGIN DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 ORM-02 PRS-01 (ISO) R

DRAFTED BY D/HA:RVFIMBRES:LGS
APPROVED BY D/HA/ORM:JLCARLIN
D/HA/ORM:SCLOWMAN
EA/P:MSMITH
---------- 126953
R 042118Z SEP 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 4966

1. WE AGREE WITH SUGGESTION BY KUALA LUMPUR THAT THE NEWS MEDIA CAN PLAY A MORE USEFUL ROLE IN BRINGING HOME TO DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OPINION THE PLIGHT OF VIETNAMESE FLEEING BY BOAT. MAJOR WIRE SOURCES HAVE FILED STORIES ON THE MORE EGREGIOUS BOAT CASES. FOR THE MAIN, THE EMPHASIS HAS 0EEN ON REFUGEE FLIGHT FROM THE RIGORS OF THE NEW REGIME RATHER THAN ON THEIR IMMEDIATE RECEPTION AND TREAT-MENT BY SEA GOVERNMENTS. EXCEPTION HAS BEEN STORY BY
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GEORGE MCARTHUR FILED FROM KUALA LUMPUR WHICH APPEARED

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WASHINGTON POST OF SEPTEMBER 2. THIS WAS SENT TO YOU
SEPT. 2 BY THE WIRELESS FILE.
,
2. WE BELIEVE THAT YOU SHOULD ASSURE THAT US NEWSMEN WHO
MAY BE STATIONED LOCALLY ARE APPRISED OF THE DETAILS OF
BOAT CASES WHICH COME TO EMBASSY ATTENTION.FURTHER, WE
HOPE THAT WHERE APPROPRIATE YOU CAN BACKGROUND US NEWSMEN
ON THE GROWING PROBLEM AND RESPONSIBILITY THESE BOAT CASES
POSE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

3. FOR OUR PART, WE CONTINUE TO DRAW ATTENTION HERE TO
WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS AND SEEK TO PROMPT MEDIA STORIES AND
EDITORIAL REFLECTION REGARDING THIS SITUATION.

4. THE FACTS OF THE MOST SERIOUS CASES AS WE HAVE GLEANED
THEM FROM YOUR REPORTING HAVE BEEN:

CHOU LONG - THIS VESSEL CARRYING 22-24 REFUGEES WAS ORDERED
AWAY FROM INDONESIA FOLLOWING REPAIRS THERE BY AGIP. IT
SANK AUG. 26 ON THE WAY TO WEST MALAYSIA. THE AUSTRALIAN
REGISTRY VESSEL LADY CYNTHIA, OWNED BY AGIP, HAD ESCORTED
THE CHOU LONG AND WAS ABLE TO RESCUE THE REFUGEES. THE
CYNTHIA ARRIVED IN SINGAPORE AUG. 29 BUT THE REFUGEES HAVE
NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO DEBARK. WE UNDERSTAND AUSTRALIA IS
POSSIBLE RESETTLEMENT SITE.

CAPE ERIMO - PANAMANIAN REGISTRY, IT DEPARTED JAPAN LATE
JULY AND ARRIVED IN SINGAPORE JULY 23 WITH 31 REFUGEES
PICKED UP AT SEA. REFUGEES, INCLUDING A PREGNANT WOMAN,
WERE NOT PERMITTED TO LAND IN SINGAPORE NOR SUBSEQUENTLY
IN YEMEN ON AUG. 22. ERIMO IS EXPECTED TO RETURN EARLY
SEPTEMBER TO JAPAN WHERE WE HOPE GOP WILL EXTEND FIRST
ASYLUM AS IT HAS DONE IN THE PAST IN SIMILAR CASES. AP AND
DPA HAS TOLD US IT WILL ALERT ITS TOKYO BUREAU REGARDING
THIS CASE. SUGGEST WE ASSURE MEDIA COVERS ARRIVAL OF
CAPE ERIMO.

THAILAND - A GROUP OF 60 REFUGEES IS THREATENING TO SET
SAIL FOR AUSTRALIA IN AN ODYSSEY THAT WOULD CHALLENGE
CAPTAIN BLIGHT'S FEAT. THE REFUGEES, WHO HAVE BEEN INTER-
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VIEWED AND PASSED OVER BY IMMIGRATION OFFICERS OF SEVERAL
COUNTRIES ARE DISCOURAGED AT THEIR IRREGULAR STATUS AND
FUTURE PROSPECTS IN THAT COUNTRY AND HAVE REACHED DECISION
TO SET SAIL IN ANOTHER WEEK OR SO WHEN REPAIRS HAVE BEEN
EFFECTED IN A LARGER BOAT USED BY ARRIVING REFUGEES.

THAILAND - GROUP OF 22 REFUGEES PICKED UP BY NORWEGIAN
VESSEL KINGSVILLE AND BROUGHT TO THAILAND REPORT THEY WERE

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PASSED BY AT LEAST FIVE OTHER COMMERCIAL VESSELS BEFORE
BEING RESCUED.

MALAYSIA - GROUP OF 93 (94A,WITH BIRTH OF NEW REFUGEE -
2 DAYS OUT SAIGON) WHICH ARRIVED BY BOAT ON JULY 25 HAVE
BEEN THREATENED WITH EXPULSION AND WERE TO BE TAKEN OUT TO
SEA AUG. 30. UNDERSTAND THEY MAY NOT BE FORCED TO LEAVE
FOR SEVERAL MORE DAYS.

AL-NADJI .- REFUSED IN SINGAPORE, GROUP OF 19 REFUGEES
NOW MAY BE DROPPED OFF IN SAUDI ARABIA AND OFFERED

TEMPORARY HOUSING NORTH OF DHAHRAN. QUESTION OF WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REFUGEES WHILE THEY ARE IN SAUDI
ARABIA REMAINS UNRESOLVED AND SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE THEY
MAY BE FORCED TO CONTINUE JOURNEY TO EUROPE.

5. APPRECIATE CONTINUED REPORTING ON HUMANITARIAN AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASPECTS THESE CASES ALONG WITH REQUIRE-
MENTS ESTABLISHED IN DEPT'S 213600. ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, SHIPS, PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE220624
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RVFIMBRES:LGS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760337-0054
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760988/aaaacybb.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN DHA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 KUALA LUMPUR 4966
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <13 SEP 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES
TAGS: SREF, TH
To: BANGKOK SINGAPORE KUALA LUMPUR MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006